

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PINS, SHUM, PGOV, UY, VT

SUBJ: GOU OUTRAGED BY VATICAN DIPLOMAT'S REQUEST

FOR RELEASE OF COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER

REF: 75 MONTEVIDEO 4406 (NOTAL), 75 MONTEVIDEO 4417 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: THE SECRETARY OF THE PAPAL NUNCIATURE MONSEIGNOR GUY SAINT-HILAIRE, UNTIL RECENTLY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I., CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND REQUESTED THE RELEASE OF PCU FIRST SECRETARY JOSE LUIS MASSERA. THE LATTER WAS ARRESTED WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER PCU ACTIVISTS IN A GOU OPERATION DESIGNED TO BREAK UP THE OUTLAWED PCU. THE GOU IS OUTRAGED AND MAY DECLARE THE DIPLOMAT PNG. WHETHER SAINT-HILAIRE ACTED ON HIS OWN OR ON INSTRUCTIONS IS AS YET UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY

2. A FUROR WAS CAUSED WITHIN GOU CIRCLES WHEN THE SECRETARY OF THE PAPAL NUNCIATURE CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE TO SAY THAT HE WAS INTERESTED IN THE RELEASE OF JOSE LUIS MASSERA, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL LEADERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN URUGUAY. MASSERA, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST

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PARTY OF URUGUAY AND FORMER DEPUTY AND SENATOR OF

THE FRENTE AMPLIO, WAS ARRESTED IN THE RECENT ROUNDUP BY THE GOU OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

3. THE INTERCESSION BY MONSEIGNOR SAINT-HILAIRE WAS PARTICULARLY SURPRISING, AS MASSERA IS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MORE MILITANT HARDLINERS IN THE PCU, HAVING EVEN SUPPORTED STRONGLY THE SOVIET INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968. IT IS ALSO APPARENTLY STUNNED THE GOU SINCE SAINT-HILAIRE EVIDENTLY DID NOT GIVE ANY WARNING BEFOREHAND OF THE SUBJECT HE WANTED TO RAISE WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE. NEWS REPORTS STATE THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE RAVENNA ABRUPTLY BROKE OFF THE MEETING AS SOON AS SAINT-HILAIRE MADE HIS REQUEST.

4. FIRST NEWS REPORTS, OBVIOUSLY SANCTIONED BY GOU, APPEARED IN THE JANUARY 23 EDITIONS OF EL DIARIO AND EL PAIS UNDER FRONT PAGE HEADLINES. "SURPRISING REQUEST OUTRAGES THE GOU," SAID EL PAIS. EDITORIAL COMMENT APPEARING IN THE JANUARY 26 EDITION OF EL PAIS, A PRO-GOVERNMENT DAILY, STATED THAT THE INCIDENT HAD CREATED SUCH PROFOUND INDIGNATION IN THE GOU THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOU WOULD GO TO THE EXTREME OF DECLARING SAINT-HILAIRE PERSONA NON GRATA. THE EDITORIAL WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE RECENT ACTION BY SAINT-HILAIRE WAS PART OF A PATTERN OF ACTIONS FOLLOWED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN URUGUAY BY WHICH IT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY MARXIST IN ITS ORIENTATION AND HAD COME TO ALIGN ITSELF WITH THE DOCTRINES AND ACTIONS OF COMMUNISM AND OTHER SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATIONS. THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED THAT SOME METHOD MUST BE FOUND TO ARREST THIS PROCESS WITHIN THE CHURCH AND THAT PERHAPS RATHER THAN EXPEL SAINT-HILAIRE IT WOULD BE BETTER TO REMOVE FROM THE HIERARCHY OF THE URUGUAYAN CATHOLIC CHURCH PRELATES SYMPATHETIC TO MARXISM AND SUBSTITUTE PRELATES WHOSE IDEAS AND ACTIONS WOULD BE MORE IN CONFORMITY WITH THE OPINIONS AND SENTIMENTS OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF URUGUAYAN CATHOLICS.

5. EL PAIS ALSO REPORTED IN ITS JANUARY 24 EDITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT MASSERA HAD RECENTLY ELABORATED A PLAN OF ACTION OF PARTY INFILTRATION INTO THE CHURCH. REPORTEDLY MASSERA COMPLAINED IN THE DOCUMENT THAT THE PCU HAD DONE LITTLE TO DEVELOP ITS TIES WITH THE CHURCH. TO REMEDY THIS, MASSERA CALLED FOR INCREASED CONTACTS WITH THE CHURCH WHICH HE SAID WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE AN ANTI-GOU FORCE.

6. COMMENT: THE ACTION OF SAINT-HILAIRE COMES AS A SURPRISE. IN PREVIOUS CONTACTS WITH EMBOFFS HE HAD SHOWN AN EVEN-HANDED ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOU ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS INCLUDING THE CAPABLE HANDLING OF INCIDENT OF A PASTORAL LETTER WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN MORE TROUBLESOME THAN IT WAS. SAINT-HILAIRE'S MOTIVES AND INSPIRATION ARE NOT YET KNOWN. MANY CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT AN EXPERIENCED CAREER DIPLOMAT WOULD TAKE SUCH ACTION WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS. THEY THEORIZE THAT SAINT-HILAIRE MIGHT HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO MAKE THIS REPRESENTATION BECAUSE THE NUNCIO ARRIVED LAST DECEMBER 27 AND SAINT-HILAIRE, WHO IS DUE FOR TRANSFER THIS YEAR, COULD BE EASILY SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO MAKE THE VATICAN'S POINT. THIS, OF COURSE, ASSUMES THAT THE VATICAN HAS DECIDED TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THIS ADMINISTRATION. BUT EVEN IF SUCH A COOLING IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE GOU WAS CONTEMPLATED BY THE VATICAN, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE HEAVY-HANDED FORM IT DID -- A PLEA FOR BROAD CLEMENCY, PERHAPS, BUT NOT THE REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF THE PCU'S LEADER. ONE PLAUSIBLE VERSION OF THE INCIDENT HEARD BY EMBOFFS WAS THAT SAINT-HILAIRE WAS CONTACTED BY MASSERA'S FAMILY AND ASKED TO PASS CLOTHING OR OTHER ARTICLES TO HIM. IN LINE WITH THIS VERSION, THERE IS SPECULATION THAT SAINT-HILAIRE, IN HIS SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH RAVENNA ASKING HIM TO PERMIT THIS, PERHAPS GOT CARRIED AWAY. IN ANY EVENT, OFFICIALS THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT ARE FURIOUS. ONE MINISTER TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT SAINT-HILAIRE WOULD BE DECLARED PERSONA NON GRATA, BUT, AS TIME PASSES, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT A GRACEFUL WITHDRAWAL BY SAINT-HILAIRE WILL BE PERMITTED. SIRACUSA.

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